

Submission of Evidence Form – National Development Framework

Name

Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

Contact details

Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB,
Loggerheads Country Park,
Near Mold,
Denbighshire,
CH7 5LH

Date

02 March 2017

Title of evidence

Conserving and Enhancing Wales' Best Landscapes

Summary of evidence

The legislative framework for the designation and management of the UK's best landscapes (as amended) has been in place for almost 70 years. The need to protect, conserve and enhance AONB's and National Parks as long recognised national assets must be reflected in the proposed National Development Framework (NDF).

Summary of key issues/conclusions

- Wales' Protected landscapes (AONB's and National Parks) are national assets which should be conserved and enhanced.
- The NDF should recognise their significance and seek to deliver this objective when framing and developing national policies and proposals.

Why have you submitted this evidence?

The AONB Joint Committee and Partnership are charged with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley designated landscape and its setting. The NDF will be a critical part of Wales' planning framework going forward and the Committee and Partnership wish to ensure that the need to protect, conserve and enhance AONB's (and National Parks) is properly reflected in the framework.

How should this evidence inform the development of the NDF?

As the overarching strategic development document for Wales the NDF must

recognise the need to conserve and enhance Wales' protected landscapes in both spatial and policy contexts. This is a specific duty contained in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. They should be clearly indicated on the maps and diagrams which will form part of the framework. In addition, in formulating policies and proposals in the framework it will be necessary to have regard to the need to conserve and enhance these areas and to avoid locating major developments within them or their essential settings which could have a harmful impact on their special qualities and features. What makes each protected area special is defined in the relevant statutory AONB and National Park Management Plans. It should also be made clear that development within the protected area or its setting should be sensitively located and designed to complement or enhance the special qualities and features of the area.

How does this evidence and any actions it recommends help achieve the 7 well-being goals?

1. A prosperous Wales – The very high scenic value of Wales is widely regarded as one of our key attributes and is exemplified by our nationally designated landscapes. They are living, working landscapes and the contribution such areas make to Welsh prosperity and jobs through tourism for example is significant, and measures to conserve and enhance these assets for future generations through the NDF are vital.
2. A resilient Wales – AONB's and National Parks are amongst the most biodiverse areas of the nation. They are rich in natural resources which provide substantial and valuable ecosystem services which benefit wider society. It is important to conserve and develop these services for the benefit of current and future generations through the NDF.
3. A healthier Wales – The opportunities presented by protected landscapes to meet increasing aspirations for more active lifestyles and associated health benefits are substantial. This applies to both local resident and visitors to the area. More recent evidence about the mental well-being benefits of experiencing scenically attractive natural areas is also relevant here. AONB's and National Parks have been at the forefront of delivering and promoting active travel and lifestyles, opportunities for outdoor recreation and access to the countryside in general for many years and can continue to deliver on this important national objective.
4. A more equal Wales – Wales' protected landscapes are generally free to access and enjoy. Barriers to access are relatively small (parking charges, etc), although transport costs can be a disincentive for some economically disadvantaged groups. The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB have developed various outreach projects to help address these issues (eg a free minibus service for community groups targeted at deprived communities)
5. A Wales of cohesive communities – AONB's enable communities to become involved in the management of their local environment in sustainable

and innovative ways. The Welsh Government's Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) programme managed locally by the protected landscapes is an important delivery mechanism in this regard. Collaborative working with other local authorities and partners to successfully achieve shared objectives is a well-established feature of management of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB which supports community cohesion.

6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language – The Management Plan for the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB recognises its people and communities as a special quality of the area and that 'Bro' and the historic links between communities and their landscape is a factor in conserving and managing such special places. Conservation of the rich historic environment of the area and its cultural significance is given equal recognition. This ranges from internationally important assets such as the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Llangollen Canal World Heritage Site and the concentration of Iron Age Hillforts down to small historic features such as local wells, boundary stones or traditional walls which contribute to the distinctive character of the area.

7. A globally responsible Wales – Wales' AONB's and National Parks are part of a UK and wider international family of protected landscapes which help deliver our obligations under the European Landscape Convention. The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB is also recognised as a Category V Landscape by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) which gives global recognition to the significance of the area and its management.

Why is the evidence of national significance?

Wales is widely recognised for the beauty of its landscape, and its protected areas (AONB's and National Parks) represent the best that the country has to offer in this regard. These cherished landscapes are national assets worthy of conservation and enhancement.

Do you agree for your evidence to be made public? (Only evidence that can be made public will inform the development of the NDF)

Yes

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Title of evidence

Protecting Wales' World Heritage Sites

Summary of evidence

At a UNESCO Convention held in Paris and ratified on the 16th November 1972 World Heritage both Cultural and Natural were defined and States Parties to the convention recognised World Heritage 'whose protection was a duty of the international community as a whole to co-operate'. Flowing from this, individual States identify potential World Heritage Sites and their outstanding universal values, UNESCO then test the nominations against the convention criteria and sites are designated, or not, as World Heritage Sites. World Heritage Site is the highest level of protection available for heritage and in Wales there are three internationally important World Heritage Sites. At a Country wide level and at an individual World Heritage Site level governance structures are in place to ensure that the 'outstanding universal values' are maintained and enhanced. The recently enacted Historic Environment Act Wales 2016 has linked guidance, Managing Change in World Heritage Sites, to set out the best practice approach to WHS.

Summary of key issues/conclusions

The need to conserve and enhance the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site in the NDF.

Why have you submitted this evidence?

The AONB Joint Committee and Partnership are charged with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley designated landscape and its setting. The 'natural beauty' of the area has a cultural dimension, an important part of which includes the Pontcysyllte

Aqueduct and Llangollen Canal World Heritage Site and its buffer zone, much of which is within the AONB. As part of the inscription process for the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World heritage Site the 'outstanding universal value' was identified. It is imperative that the NDF which will be a critical part of Wales' planning framework going forward, commits to ensure that the need to protect, conserve and enhance Wales' World Heritage Sites and to ensure the 'outstanding universal value' is properly reflected in the framework.

How should this evidence inform the development of the NDF?

As the overarching strategic development document for Wales the NDF must recognise the need to conserve and enhance Wales' protected landscapes in both spatial and policy contexts. This is a specific duty contained in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. World Heritage Sites and notably the Pontcysyllte and Canal WHS, forms a key part within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB, a protected landscape. They should be clearly indicated on the maps and diagrams which will form part of the framework. In addition, in formulating policies and proposals in the framework it will be necessary to have regard to the need to conserve and enhance these areas, to protect and enhance the 'outstanding universal value' and to avoid locating major developments within them or their essential settings and buffer zones which could have a harmful impact on their special qualities and features and their 'outstanding universal value'. What makes each protected area special is defined in the relevant statutory AONB and National Park Management Plans. It should also be made clear that development within the protected area or its setting should be sensitively located and designed to complement or enhance the special qualities and features of the area. World Heritage Sites also have management plans which outline the key elements and sets out actions to enhance and improve their outstanding universal value and to manage risk to the value of the site.

How does this evidence and any actions it recommends help achieve the 7 well-being goals?

1. A prosperous Wales – The very high heritage value of Wales is widely regarded as one of our key attributes and is exemplified by our nationally designated landscapes and World Heritage Sites. They are living, working landscapes and the contribution such areas make to Welsh prosperity and jobs through tourism for example is significant, and measures to conserve and enhance these assets for future generations through the NDF are vital. North Wales came 4th in the world ranking of best places to visit as identified by Lonely Planet guides. A measure of the economic importance of the area which is firmly based in the quality of the historic environment as exemplified by both AONB and WHS designation.

2. A resilient Wales – AONB's and National Parks are amongst the most biodiverse areas of the nation. They are rich in natural resources which provide substantial and valuable ecosystem services which benefit wider society. It is important to conserve and develop these services for the benefit

of current and future generations through the NDF. The Pontcysyllte and Canal WHS is important for its biodiversity but also as a drinking water source downstream of the WHS.

3. A healthier Wales – The opportunities presented by protected landscapes to meet increasing aspirations for more active lifestyles and associated health benefits are substantial. This applies to both local resident and visitors to the area. More recent evidence about the mental well-being benefits of experiencing scenically attractive natural areas is also relevant here. AONB's and National Parks have been at the forefront of delivering and promoting active travel and lifestyles, opportunities for outdoor recreation and access to the countryside in general for many years and can continue to deliver on this important national objective. The WHS supports canoeing and bicycling along the towpath as well as walking which are integral parts of its function.

4. A more equal Wales – The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal WHS can provide access and recreation opportunities to people of all ages, race, ability, gender, to everyone. The areas include a great deal of open access land accessible at all times, the Offa's Dyke National Trail, Regional Routes and more local routes. The Boards of both work together to provide different levels of accessibility to suit the adventurous as well as the less able. It is important that these opportunities are recognised and reflected within the NDF

5. A Wales of cohesive communities – AONB's enable communities to become involved in the management of their local environment in sustainable and innovative ways. The Welsh Government's Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) programme managed locally by the protected landscapes is an important delivery mechanism in this regard. Collaborative working with other local authorities and partners to successfully achieve shared objectives is a well-established feature of management of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB which supports community cohesion. The WHS structures encourage local community involvement and volunteering, events are organised with the specific aim of drawing communities together along the 11 mile linear feature.

6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language – The Management Plan for the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB and the WHS Management Plan recognises its people and communities as a special quality of the area and that 'Bro' and the historic links between communities and their landscape is a factor in conserving and managing such special places. Conservation of the rich historic environment of the area and its cultural significance is given equal recognition. This ranges from internationally important assets such as the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Llangollen Canal World Heritage Site and the concentration of Iron Age Hillforts and medieval Castles down to small historic features such as local wells, boundary stones or traditional walls which contribute to the distinctive character of the area. The International Eisteddfod attracts people from across the World to this area as does the WHS, bringing a variety of peoples and cultures to Wales.

7. A globally responsible Wales – Wales' AONB's and National Parks are part of a UK and wider international family of protected landscapes which help deliver our obligations under the European Landscape Convention. The WHS is an internationally inscribed heritage feature inscribed by UNESCO. The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB is also recognised as a Category V Landscape by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) which gives global recognition to the significance of the area and its management.

Why is the evidence of national significance?

UNESCO World Heritage Sites are internationally recognised as the best examples of cultural and natural heritage sites around the world which are of outstanding value to humanity. Wales has a duty to ensure that such internationally significant assets are protected.

Do you agree for your evidence to be made public? (Only evidence that can be made public will inform the development of the NDF)

Yes

Submission of Projects Form – National Development Framework

Name

Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

Contact details

Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB,
Loggerheads Country Park,
Near Mold,
Denbighshire,
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Date

02 March 2017

Interest in site

The AONB Joint Committee and Partnership are charged with conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley designated landscape in a sustainable way. The well-established Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) provides the means to support small scale community initiatives throughout the AONB which contribute to the achievement of this objective.

Details of landowner

Various private and public landowners.

Title of project

AONB Sustainable Development Fund

Summary of project

The Sustainable Development Fund (SDF) is a long-standing and successful Welsh Government funded initiative delivered locally by the AONB (and Wales' other protected landscapes).

The purpose of the SDF is, through partnership, to develop and test ways of achieving sustainable development in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in which the local characteristics of culture, wildlife, landscape, diversity, land use and community are conserved and enhanced. And:

- To explore innovative ways of contributing as far as practicable to the Welsh Government's vision of a sustainable Wales, and of breaking down barriers that can act as obstacles to sustainability
- To integrate sustainable development with the special qualities of the AONB, and demonstrate the contribution of a strong sense of place and local

identity to sustainable living.

- To build capacity in local communities and to develop and support community –based projects promoting sustainable development objectives.
- To generate greater awareness and understanding of sustainability amongst residents and visitors, and facilitate positive behaviour change.

Location of project (Please attach location map)

Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB

What consents are required?

Various, depending on the type of project being supported. These are identified and considered at the project development stage for each scheme and resolved as required as projects progress through to delivery and completion.

Consents already granted relevant to project

N/A

Public engagement to date

Each year the Sustainable Development Officer attends different meetings and forums to promote the Sustainable Development Fund including Town and Community Councils, Destination Management Partnerships and Local Action Groups.

Has an environmental assessment been prepared? (Yes / No)

Most SDF projects are by their nature small scale community based initiatives which do not require formal EIA.

Are there any site designations or constraints affecting the site?

Various, depending on the project. These are identified and considered at the project development stage for each scheme and resolved as required as projects progress through to delivery and completion.

What is the delivery timescale for the project?

Continuous, but regular reporting and accounting of outcomes is an established part of the existing delivery mechanism for SDF.

How would the project contribute to the delivery of the 7 well-being goals?

1. A prosperous Wales – SDF has supported a number of sustainable tourism initiatives aimed at supporting the tourism sector in the AONB and linking it to

the outstanding landscape the area offers. Clwydian Range Food Trail and the Dee Valley Good Grub club have been established with SDF support to grow short supply chains around local foods. Landscape branding has helped to provide a premium of certain products including lamb, beer and honey. SDF has also supported the outdoor sector, developing training programmes around paddle sports and bringing outdoor sector businesses together around joint marketing and package building. The AONB has also developed a Guide scheme – a course aimed at the tourism sector promoting the special qualities of the AONB and establishing official AONB guides across the tourism sector

2. A resilient Wales – SDF has developed a small grant scheme for Farmers to restore and extend hedgerow and walls as well as other small farm conservations schemes. SDF has also been supporting graziers on the Clwydian Range and Llantysilio to deliver sustainable moorland management large areas of which are SAC. SDSF has also supported the Alyn and Wheeler Landscape Project which has delivered key habitat improvements along the river Alyn and Wheeler and has also worked with communities and volunteers on Himalayan Balsam removal.

3. A healthier Wales – SDF has been supporting the Actif Wood programme providing opportunities for groups and individuals with health issues to access their local green spaces. Also supporting the work of Troedio Clwyd volunteers who provide walking opportunities for people with health issues.

4. A more equal Wales – SDF has supported a number of initiatives aimed at providing opportunities for disadvantaged communities. A community transport scheme provides free transport for disadvantaged groups to visit the AONB. SDF has also established a Young Rangers Group in Ruabon and Plas Madog Communities First Areas and has brought groups from Rhyl to key sites in the AONB

5. A Wales of cohesive communities – SDF supports a number of projects every year to support community initiatives and are currently working to develop old K6 telephone kiosks across the AONB into information points, community libraries, bike workshops etc. SDF has also supported a number of community transport initiatives linking communities to local services and visitors to key locations

6. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language – SDF has been working with Mentr Iaith to bring communities together to develop mini museums based around changing aspects of rural life.

7. A globally responsible Wales – SDF has supported a number of community renewable schemes. Feasibility into schemes at Lladegla and Tremeirchion as well as the implementation of a scheme at Corwen. SDF has also supported the production of a series of educational materials relating to climate change and its impacts on the landscape – one aimed at key stage 2 school level and the other at landscape and planning professionals.

Why is the project of national significance?

Wales is widely recognised for the beauty of its landscape, and its protected areas (AONB's and National Parks) represent the best that the country has to offer in this regard. These cherished landscapes are national assets worthy of conservation and enhancement, and the long-standing Welsh Government funded SDF programme delivered locally by the individual protected landscapes is a vital component of any national strategy to achieve this objective in sustainable and innovative ways.

- Without the support of SDF many projects would simply just not happen in our communities thus making the AONB relevant.
- The fund also levers in additional funding from other private, public and voluntary sectors.
- SDF helps to achieve sustainable development through working at the community level and through community groups.
- The Fund supports all sorts of different projects which relate to the different aspects of sustainable development.
- The aim is ambitious, but the Fund is clearly focussed on sustainable development and does make a contribution.
- The process of applying for funding helps to raise awareness about what sustainable development is because of what people need to consider in their application.
- SDF funded projects have integrated well with the work done more generally in the AONB area to manage its special qualities, and plays a noticeable role in contributing towards objectives of the AONB Management Plan.

Do you agree for your project and any supporting information to be made public? (Only projects and information that can be made public will inform the development of the NDF.)

Yes